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CHRISTMAS.

For more than 1900 years the Christmas festival has been observed, and interest in the holiday is as pronounced today as at any other period in the history of this wonderful world. It is pre-eminently our greatest holiday, and the sentimental customs that have grown out of it have vastly elevated our moral tone and developed the goodness in that great class which emotion alone dominates. Primarily set apart to commemorate the most notable event in history—the birth of Christ—the day has come to be one of charitable deeds and friendly manifestations. Tomorrow those of us whom God has blessed will enthusiastically give ourselves over to proper observance of the day, with no lack of interest in our gift-giving nor in the remembrances of those who have always remembered us; and those unfortunates to whom Christmas brings no cheer will sorrowfully await the passing of the day, that realization of their lowly position may be forgotten in the struggle for the necessities of life.

Fortunately, we of the west seldom come in contact with cases of extreme poverty, and our field for charitable work is limited. However, the disposition to do good manifests itself at this season of the year even in such prosperous sections as Astoria. The home of many an Astorian who, in the east, would be considered fairly well-to-do will be made brighter tomorrow by the kindly persons more fortunately situated, and generally there will be a studied effort at charity in the very poorest field imaginable.

Let us hope Astoria may always be the home of the prosperous, that future Christmases may dawn as joyously as that of the present year.

THE CITY HALL PROPOSAL.

Astoria's greatest present requirement is a new city hall—or, more properly speaking, a city hall. This is obvious to everyone who has given the matter careful consideration. The council has taken the first steps in the direction of the needed improvement, and it is to be hoped the ordinance passed at the last meeting will become effective.

The present seat of the municipal government is not only a disgrace to the community, but it is as well wholly inadequate to the demands of the business of the corporation. The most valuable business corner in the city is at present the location of a stable. The chemical engine is rushed out of the building onto a crowded street whenever an alarm of fire is turned in, and that accident has not heretofore occurred is our good fortune, and not because of any foresight or precaution. The city jail, occupying the rear portion of the structure, is about ready to fall into the river, and is not a safe place of detention for even the casual drunkard. There is no vault in the building and the records of the city are liable to destruction at any time. The offices of the various officials excepting alone that of the auditor, present a shameful appearance, and neither the city attorney—the most important official of the city—nor the city treasurer can be found at the city hall.

Were it not for the pressing need of repairs to the building we might struggle along with the present cramped quarters for a few years to come; but immediate improvements

must be made if the building is to be continued as the city hall. The old shack is worth \$2500 or \$3000, at a liberal estimate, and the repairs will necessitate an outlay of fully \$7000. Certainly, it would not be wise to expend this sum in repairs to a building worth only one-third the amount.

It would seem that the council has no alternative than to provide for a new building. Some of the members are opposed to sale of the present site, but those members have agreed to purchase of a new one. The new site has been secured very reasonably, is well located and doubtless will be acquired by the city. The old site may double in value in five years, but the city is not in the real estate business, except in so far as its present needs are concerned. If the council can realize the full value of the property at the present time it will do well to sell. Were the city well provided with funds, it might be advisable to hold the land, but the sale must be accomplished before a new building can be erected. The council must do one of two things—sell the present site and build a new hall on the Taylor property, or expend \$7000 on the present shack. It will perhaps be generally agreed that the first course is the only one that could reasonably be taken.

American passenger cars are in a general way, the most comfortable of any in the world, but they are often made almost unendurable by the carelessness of porters and brakemen who have charge of the heating apparatus, says the Railway Age. Since the general introduction of steam heat from the locomotive it is an easy matter by simply turning a valve to supply sufficient steam to heat the cars comfortably in very cold weather, and when the same amount of steam is used in moderate weather they become overheated. The result of this overheating is that passengers are not only uncomfortable during the journey but they are in the same condition they would be in the heating room of a Turkish bath, and it is just as dangerous and imprudent to go into the outside air from the car as from the bathhouse without a gradual cooling off. Numerous cases of pneumonia and bad colds are produced in this way and passengers who go on a journey for the benefit of their health do not obtain benefit but actually injury. The railroads certainly owe something better than this to their patrons. When the proper regulation of the temperature of passenger cars can be so easily obtained by a little intelligent attention on the part of the trainmen there is no good excuse for so much discomfort and disease as is caused, in the manner described, by their carelessness. The porter is not very busy between stations, and since the air brakes do the principal part of the work of the brakeman it should be made their duty to maintain a uniform temperature of 70 degrees F. in the cars. With proper discipline, it would seem possible to obtain this very desirable condition.

On June 30, 1902, the number of pensioners on the roll was 997,735; a year later there were 996,545, a decline of 1,190. This is probably but the beginning of a decrease which will become marked as the years go on, and which leads the commissioner of pensions to say in his annual report that in ten years the pension system will not be a noticeable public burden. Judging from the records, however, it will be many years before the last of the pensioners of our past wars have disappeared. Two widows of the revolution are living and three daughters whose names are on the pension roll. There are one survivor and 115 widows of the war of 1812 and 5,964 survivors and 7,910 widows of the war with Mexico. The revolutionary war ended in 1783, the war of 1812 in 1814, but we are still paying pensioners of a war which ended 120 years ago. If the record be maintained, the pensioners of the civil war will not have been paid until 1955, and of the Spanish war until the next century. The burden is admittedly a large one, calling in the last fiscal year for \$138,500,000, but there is no obligation the government has paid with greater cheerfulness, and it will continue to pay with the same spirit. It matters not if it be true, as has been stated, that Russia is the only country in the world that pays more for its standing army than the United States pays in pensions, or that, as is claimed, England, with her great naval and military establishment, has paid only \$6,000,000 of late years on pension account. They only show that no other country is as generous to its disabled defenders as the United States.

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HYMN.

On the Morning of Christ's Nativity.

It was the winter wild
While the heaven born child,
All mealy wrapped, in the rude
manger lies:
Nature, in awe to him,
Has loosed her gaudy trim,
With her great master so to sympathize.

No war, or battle's sound
Was heard the world around;
The idle spear and shield were high
up hung;
The hooked chariot stood
Unstained with hostile blood;
The trumpet spake not to the armed
throng;
And kings sat still, with awful eye,
As if they surely knew their sovereign
Lord was by.

But peaceful was the night
Wherein the Prince of Light
His reign of peace upon earth began
The winds with wonder whist,
Smoothly the waters kissed,
Whispering new joys to the mild
ocean—
Who hath now quite forgot to rave,
While birds of calm sit brooding on the
charmed wave.
The stars with deep amaze

Stand fixed in steadfast gaze,
Bending one way their precious
influence;
And will not take their flight
For all the morning light,
Or Lucifer, that often warned them
thence;
But in their glimmering orbs did glow
Until their Lord himself bespake, and
bid them go.

Yea, truth and justice, then
Will down return to men,
Orbed in a rainbow; and, like glories
wearing
Mercy will sit between
Throned in celestial sheen,
With radiant feet the tissued clouds
down steering;
And heaven, as at some festival,
Will open wide the gates of her high
palace hall.

—John Milton.

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Program is subject to change without notice.

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